



Summer 2024

Issue No. 203



To Preserve the Natural Beauty, Water Quality and Biological Diversity...

Photo by Tom Ray

2024 TLEA Annual Meeting

The Thompson Lake Environmental Association 2024 Annual Meeting will be held at the Oxford Recreational Hall, King St., on Saturday, August 3 from 9:00-11:00 AM. This year we will have extended presentations of our various programs, including our 319 Grant Program, milfoil mitigation, LakeSmart and the Youth Conservation Corps. We will also hold our annual election of board directors and consider amendments to our by laws. This should be an informative and enjoyable meeting of the members of our lake community.

Mark this date on your calender to hear about the association, environmental issues involving the lake, and once again meet up with your neighbors and friends. As usual, there will be an assortment of baked goods and treats. Of course, we will raffle of some TLEA merch. Don't miss it!

319 Grant Program for Non-Point Source Pollution

Our watershed survey of Thompson Lake was completed in June of 2023. We then worked with the Maine DEP to develop a comprehensive watershed protection plan for the next 10 years. This plan will qualify TLEA to apply for federal 319 Grants which are part of the Clean Water Act of 1972.

We are proud to say that with the direction of Emma Russo of the Androscoggin County Soil and Water Conservation District, we completed an extensive application for these funds in spring of 2024. This application requested funding to support proposed erosion control programs such as: technical assistance for landowners and road associations to reduce non-point source pollution (erosion), working with towns and road associations on selected larger scale projects, and residential matching grants (RMG) for smaller projects which will be available for landowners with medium or high impact erosion sites. These RMG grants will be available in 2025-26 to fund individual projects up to \$1,500 with a 50% match for an estimated 10 projects over 2 years. These grants would be granted on a first come, first served basis.

Our Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) could also obtain additional funding to assist landowners with erosion control projects. If the application is accepted, landowners could receive technical assistance from the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts for these projects and YCC labor at no cost. These funds were requested for at least 20 sites over 2 years.

Presently, we are working with the town of Otisfield, Agassiz Village and the Beechwoods Road Association to provide funds for major NPS mitigation projects including road improvements, drainage ditches, culvert installation and modifications of walking trails in the period of 2025-26. We hope to work with others in the future to utilize these funds.

We will be sending out a mailing to the road associations explaining this program and how they could benefit from it. We continue to communicate with the local towns to look for ways they could use these funds to improve roads and reduce erosion. Landowners who would like to take advantage of this program should contact Paul Cain at tleawatershed2023@gmail.com. We will discuss this program more at the Annual Meeting and further details will be on our website.

Youth Conservation Corps

Jim Skinner reports that YCC has had a busy start to the summer. Program Coordinator Chris Stoehner and his crew have already tackled several erosion control projects at camp driveways, installation of rubber razor bar, construction of diversion steps along pathways and many box culvert replacements.

YCC can develop remediation plans for property erosion sites, obtain the necessary permits, and provide cost estimates for the prospective projects that only require hand tools at a reduced cost compared to outside contractors. The crew can perform the type of projects described above, as well as developing stone drip lines for roofs, planting vegetative buffers, placement of erosion control mulch and creation of rain gardens and more.

We hope to be able to reduce costs for these type of projects even more in 2025 through the use of 319 Grant funds, If you have concerns about an erosion problem on your property and would like to get the YCC involved, contact Jim at: tlea.yccdirector@gmail.com. The 2024 season will end by August 15, but plans can be made for 2025.

LakeSmart

The LakeSmart team has been busy inspecting properties around the lake this summer. By the end of July, 31 TLEA members had signed up for this program and the team had completed 12 inspections. Three homeowners were given the LakeSmart Award based on strict standards for controlling runoff. The owners of the other properties were given instructions on how they could improve erosion control and will have the opportunity to be reassessed. The program is collaborating

with McLaughlin Gardens to assist landowners in developing their vegetative buffers, a key component to erosion control.

LakeSmart is an education and reward program that helps lakefront homeowners manage landscapes particularly their buffer areas in ways that protect water quality. For more information check out this link: <https://www.lakes.me/lakesmart>. The program is free, non-regulatory, and voluntary. If you are interested in having the team visit your property, please contact Ron Armontrout at: director.tlea@gail.com or our office administrator, Sarah Ferry at: office.tlea@gmail.com.

Milfoil Removal Update

Crew chief Alex Bernardy reports that they have surveyed all the major coves of the lake, as well as the Oxford dam area. There has been significant regrowth of milfoil in the Pine Point area consisting of mostly large individual plants. These have been removed by either hand pulling or suction harvesting. There has been moderate regrowth at the other coves.

In a discussion with Denise Blanchette of the Maine DEP, Alex was informed that there has been an increase in the growth of invasive plant species throughout the state due to the mild winter, shortage of ice cover and the warming temperatures of lake waters.

Regrowth of this invasive plant is to be expected and illustrates the need to continue our milfoil mitigation efforts in the future. The crew will continue to survey the entire lake annually for signs of new introductions or regrowth. This is a battle that we must continue to fight.

Courtesy Boat Inspections

CBI Director Danny Crowley reports that so far, no invasive plants have been found at the public launches and boat owners seem very aware about checking their boats for plants. We hope to fully monitor the public boat launches during weekends and holidays depending on the availability of inspectors. When it comes to invasive species in a lake an ounce of prevention can literally prevent tons of milfoil (TLEA has already removed over 500 tons of milfoil from the lake).

To prevent the spread of invasive species it is crucial to clean, drain and dry your boat when entering or leaving a body of water. Remember as of 2024, by state law

all boats entering or leaving a boat ramp must have the bilge plugs removed. Don't forget to re-insert before launching the boat!

We are still in need for inspectors for this very important program. If you or anyone you know would be interested, please contact Danny at dannycrowley@sbcglobal.net.

Update on Water Quality

As noted in the 2023 Water Quality Report from our limnologist Scott Williams, the water clarity at Thompson Lake has diminished over the past 2 years. This year our Secchi disc readings have struggled to reach 7 meters, while in years past these have ranged from 7-10 meters during the same time periods. This is most likely secondary to the heavy rains in 2023-24 and the warming of the lake waters. Much of the decrease in clarity appears to be secondary to runoff of organic "humic" compounds from degraded plant compounds, and not necessarily algal growth. However, water that is colored with this humic material absorbs more solar radiation leading to increased temperatures and the potential for algal blooms.

Rain cycles come and go, but climate change is very much with us for the long haul. What is the solution? The factor that we can most alter is the amount of erosion in our watershed. As a lake community we should, as the philosopher Voltaire stated, "tend to our own gardens" (pretty sure he meant buffers) and also participate in and support watershed conservation organizations such as TLEA.

Notes from the Schoodic Trip for Otisfield 6th Graders

For the past years TLEA has sponsored a school trip for local 6th graders to spend a weekend at the Schoodic Institute in Bar Harbor where they enjoy the ocean, have an extended sleep over and learn environmental principles. We felt this was worth the expense as this would educate young people to appreciate the environment and learn how to be good stewards of it. Recently Theresa Libby, a 6th grade teacher at Otisfield Community School confirmed this with a letter of appreciation about this program, some of which is as follows:

When I was hired to teach this year, 2023-2024, I had parents reaching out to me about Schoodic before school began. They wanted to be sure I knew how important this trip was and how much of an impact it had on previous students... We diligently raised money throughout the year. Without the help of TLEA for busing, we

wouldn't have been able to go. I had no idea the magic we were about to experience....

Some of our students live in homes where the families are struggling. For three days they were served well balanced, nutritious meals, had a nice bed, clean linens and electricity... The staff is very aware of all the different needs of students and make sure to meet all their personal and educational needs. Every lesson is taught in different learning styles to meet everyone's needs...For some, this may be their only chance to experience the ocean until they are adults.

To move on to the educational value of this opportunity. I could talk about it for days! These students absorbed every second of the lessons. They have a giant Maine map that is to scale. The children reinforce their knowledge about longitude and latitude and learn about different towns, bodies of water, and landmarks in Maine... We had a student find the FIRST grey tree frog at Schoodic! Scientists have been looking for them and have not found them. Because of her forest safety and observation, she noticed the frog! Because of our OTISFIELD student, the grey tree frog is now photographed, measured, observed and entered into the scientific data. How cool is it that FOREVER, our student, that because of your generosity, will be the first person to have discovered them and entered the data?

These students are bonding, discussing what they have learned and planning for their future!

Thank you, Theresa, for mentoring these kids and sharing their experience with us. We consider this program a good investment in our local community.

Briefly Noted

Annual Loon Count: Will be held on Saturday, July 20 from 7:00- 8:00 AM. If you can volunteer, please contact Peggy Dorf at PeggyDorf@ymail.com.

Boat Wakes: Remember, by state law boats should not make a wake within 200 feet of shore. The reason is that these waves can disrupt loon nests and cause erosion of the shoreline. This is especially apparent at the eastern shoreline north of the Pismo boat launch where trees have fallen into the water. Please remember to maintain only headway speed along the channel when leaving this launch.

TLEA Website: Have you checked the new website lately? It's at <http://www.thompsonlake.org>. It's full of lake information and you can also renew your membership or give a donation to our projects.

Clynck Bags: Can be picked up at our office at 163 Pleasant St., Oxford. Say “Hi” to our new administrator, Sarah Ferry.

Use of Herbicides to Remove Milfoil: Some people have asked if herbicides could be used to remove these plants. According to the Maine DEP, even though aquatic herbicides can be easily purchased online or in stores, they are hazardous to the environment as well as the applicator. They also present a threat to neighbors or anyone around during the application. *Their use without a permit from the DEP and an applicator’s license is a serious legal offense.*

Porta Potty at the Landing!: To protect the water quality of the lake and provide a service to boaters, TLEA has placed a porta potty at the this popular boat launch.



Photo by Kathy Cain

Visit our website at:
www.thompsonlake.org

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Published three times annually by the
Thompson Lake Environmental Association
(207) 539-4535

Editor: Paul Cain

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U.S. Postage
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AUBURN, ME 04210
Permit #71